

International early language initiatives

There are a number of early language initiatives around the world that demonstrate good practice. We know about a few in some English speaking countries but we are always on the look out for early language initiatives from around the rest of the world. If you know of any other international initiatives focused on early years communication, please let us know about them. [Email us](#).

Initiatives in:

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 - [Canada](#)
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Early language initiatives in Australia

The **Triple P Positive Parenting** programme is for parents, practitioners and organisations that work with parents. It was developed at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia and aims to prevent severe behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents. The programme includes five levels of intervention, from which users can select the level that is most suited to their specific needs. For more information visit www.triplep.net.

Early language initiatives in Canada

The Macaulay Child Development Centre in Canada is a multi-service, childcare and family support agency. A non-profit organisation, it promotes the optimal development of children in partnership with their family and community. It is the base for the four Ontario early years literacy specialists in the city of Toronto who run training and workshops for parents, teachers, professionals and home childcare providers. They also co-facilitate and consult with public health nurses, librarians and other community groups. For more information visit www.macaulaycentre.org.

Roots of Empathy is a programme developed in Canada that focuses in the long term on building the capacity of the next generation for caring and compassionate citizenship and parenting. In the short term it focuses on raising levels of empathy, resulting in more respectful and caring relationships and reduced levels of bullying and aggression. The programme is universal and engages all students rather than just bullies or aggressive children. It is evidence-based and includes visits to the classroom every three weeks over the school year by a neighbourhood infant and parent. With a certified 'Roots of Empathy' instructor, students are coached to observe the baby's development, celebrate milestones, interact with the baby and learn about an infant's needs and temperament. It includes a curriculum divided into nine themes, with three classroom sessions supporting each theme. For more information visit www.rootsofempathy.org.

Babymatterz, an initiative in the UK, is based on a similar principal to that of Roots of Empathy. Visit www.babymatterz.com for further information.

Early language initiatives in New Zealand

The Plunket Society is a New Zealand provider of child and family health services. It provides a mix of a professionally educated workforce working hand-in-hand with volunteers throughout New Zealand. Plunket programmes aim to support families with young children by providing appropriate clinical and support programmes and educational activities. For more information visit www.plunket.org.nz.

Tots & Toddlers is an interactive life skills course designed to introduce senior students to the realities of parenting. Organised by Plunket, a national not-for-profit organisation in New Zealand, it is intended to reinforce the responsibilities of parenthood and the value of parenting as an important human relationship.

The course gives students information on the basic needs of young children, creating an awareness of health issues. One objective of 'Tots & Toddlers' is to create positive attitudes and behaviours in adolescents by exposing them to practical hands-on experience and examples of parenting. It includes a mix of hands-on, practical application of basic skills appropriate to a child's stage of growth and development as well as theory-based sessions. The course also promotes an awareness of community groups that support families.

Course sessions include:

- Learning and development - appropriate toys for development stage, safety toys, family engagement through activities
- Differences in parenting styles - positive behaviour management strategies, impact on lives, family violence

Course resources consist of a student workbook, student answer book, student assessment schedule and a 'Tots & Toddlers' video. These are also supported by Plunket factsheets, a Plunket booklet entitled *Thriving Under Five*, posters, Plunket policies and other resources.

[Read more information about Plunket.](#)

Early language initiatives in the United States

The **Bonding with Baby** website is run by Developing Heart Systems in the US, the non-profit educational publishers of Bonding with Baby development books. Its mission is to create and distribute tools and techniques to help parents and children bond and to foster a love of learning. The website has articles and information for parents and practitioners, as well as access to the *Bonding with Baby Year 1 Literacy Kit*. This includes access to wordless picture books to enable parents of all backgrounds and skills to begin book sharing with their babies. For more information visit www.bondingwithbaby.com.

Early Words: A Child is Always Listening is a collaborative initiative in Multnomah County in Oregon, USA, designed to emphasise the everyday things parents and caregivers can do to enhance literacy and language development for children aged birth - five. The County Library leads on the initiative with a range of partners, which includes the Commission on Children, Families & Community, the Oregon Centre for Career Development in Childhood, Care and Education, and the Oregon Child

Development Coalition. The collective vision is that by kindergarten, all children will have the language and literacy skills they need to succeed in school and beyond. The website www.earlywords.net has pages on 'Why This Matters', some simple tips, and a range of downloadable training materials and other resources.

Every Child Ready to Read @ the Library is an American programme that is a joint initiative of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children. Research on early literacy and brain development indicates that it is never too early to prepare children for success as readers, and parents of newborns, toddlers and preschoolers need to be informed of their critical role as their child's first teacher. This is the aim of the initiative, which works with library systems to help them in their key role as disseminators of early literacy information to parents, childcare providers, early childhood educators, children's advocates and political decision makers.

The initiative includes model public library programmes incorporating research and specific parent and carer resources that were developed by Dr Grover C Whitehurst and Dr Christopher Lonigan, well-known researchers in emergent literacy. They are available to libraries, along with a workshop programme, to help them to encourage parents and carers to impact the early reading experiences of preschool children. For more information visit www.pla.org.

Harlem Children's Zone, HCZ, is a non-profit organisation that has created a web of programmes that begin before birth and end with college and graduation. The goal: to change the achievements and expectations of every one of the 10,000 children living in 97 blocks of one of the most devastated communities in America.

The organisation works on the premise that change can only be guaranteed by raising the expectations of the whole community simultaneously, as "for children to do well, their families have to do well. And for families to do well, their community must do well," said HCZ's president Geoffrey Canada. That is why HCZ works to strengthen families as well as empowering them to have a positive impact on their children's development.

The "conveyor belt" of programmes from the HCZ begins with Baby College, a nine-week prenatal and early childhood parenting class with sections on brain development, discipline and parent-child bonding. The next step, for three-year-olds, is the Children's Zone preschool, then the promise Academy, the well-funded, successful charter schools that are the centrepiece of Canada's efforts. The cost is about \$5,000 per child.

Visit www.hcz.org for more information.

Dolly Parton's favourite title is 'the Book Lady' - a title kids gave her because of her **Imagination Library project**. Through this project children receive a carefully selected book each month from birth to five - a total of 60 books. Parton developed the Imagination Library project in 1995 for Sevier County, Tennessee, where she was born. Having grown up poor in a home where books were a luxury, and firmly believing in the power of reading to stimulate a child's imagination, she wanted every pre-school child to have his or her own library of books.

Funded through Parton's non-profit Dollywood Foundation, the project received many awards and generated much media attention. Parton offered the Imagination Library

for replication in any community that would support it. The project now serves more than 180 communities in 25 states (of America) and distributed close to one million free books in 2003. The programme now serves 92 Native American communities throughout the country.

(Reading Today - the bi-monthly newspaper of the International Reading Association, February/March 2003)

Update (September 2004) Parton successfully lobbied for state-wide funding for the 'Imagination Library' programme in her home state of Tennessee. Ten of Tennessee's 95 counties already had Imagination Library programmes. In officially adopting the programme, the State of Tennessee allocated \$2m for matching grants for organisations and groups which are already sponsoring Imagination Libraries. A First Books Foundation was also set up to promote the scheme and raise private funds to reduce costs. The programme costs \$27 per year, per child. There are approximately 375,000 children under five in Tennessee, all of whom were made eligible.

Reach Out and Read is a US programme, established in 1989, that builds on the special relationship between doctors and the parents of young children to support children's language and literacy development. At well-child visits, from age six months to five years, doctors and nurses provide information about the importance of reading aloud and give new, developmentally appropriate books to the children to take home. In the waiting room, volunteers read to children, modelling techniques for parents. Visit www.reachoutandread.org for more information.

International resources for professionals

Learning with Other Countries: International Models of Early Education and Care, published by The Daycare Trust, July 2005. This report brings together papers written by experts from six countries, some of whom participated in the Daycare Trust's Annual Conference in November 2004. The publication aims at sharing and co-constructing knowledge on early education and care by examining the strengths and weaknesses of International models of children's services. According to the report those countries with universal access to high quality, affordable childcare spend between 1 and 2 per cent of GDP on services and cap parental costs at one third of actual costs. Britain spends 0.54 percent of GDP on early education and care, with parents paying around 75 per cent of actual costs. To order, go to www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

Support from the Start: Lessons from International Early Years Policy by Jenny North, published by The Maternity Alliance, July 2005. This report presents new evidence from eight countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the US) about what works in supporting pregnant women, new parents, and babies in the first year of life. The report makes recommendations based on the evidence, but tailored to the UK. The findings look in particular at improving birth outcomes, increasing breastfeeding rates and fostering healthy cognitive and emotional development. The recommendations cover suggestions about improving antenatal support, implementing home visiting, facilitating peer support, improving childcare and increasing financial support. To order copies or download, see www.maternityalliance.org.uk.